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Party Reforms and the Unbalancing of the Cleavage Structure in Russian Regional Elections, 2012-15.

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Abstract

This study analyses the influence of the party reforms of 2012 and the ‘counter-reforms’ of 2013-14 on the Russian party system, and the structure of political and electoral cleavages in Russian regions. The emergence of new political parties in 2012-13 led to a temporary increase in electoral competition, an augmentation of the political space and a rise in the number of electoral cleavages, but these developments did not weaken the domination of United Russia. The trend towards an ever greater tightening up of entry requirements for contestation in the elections led to a lowering of the number of political and, consequently, electoral cleavages, in addition to a reformatting of the political space. The study shows that there was an unbalancing of the political cleavage structure in 2012-15: the socioeconomic political cleavage, whose primary place is a key determinant of equilibrium, ceded the top position to the authoritarian-democratic cleavage in 2012-13, and to the “Ukrainian” (systemic) cleavage in 2014-15.

Key Words: cleavage structure, Russian regional elections, political and electoral cleavages, party reform in Russia

The party and electoral reforms of 2012 and the counter-reforms of 2013-14 have had a major influence on elections to regional legislatures in Russia. The adoption of new rules governing the registration of parties, and the emergence of scores of new parties, not only intensified the levels of political competition but also changed the structure of the political and electoral cleavages in the regions.

The aim of this paper is to analyse how changes in the number of parties competing in regional elections have affected the cleavage structure at the regional level. Since 2004 Russian regional legislatures have been elected by a mixed electoral system (combining party list PR elections with single mandate races). As party membership has not been an important factor in the single member races (Golosov 2004), we focus on the party list contests in four rounds of regional assembly elections conducted over the period 2012-15. The first section analyses changes to electoral and party legislation, the second examines the party makeup of regional legislatures and the third provides a detailed account of changes in the cleavage structure.

1. Changes to Party and Electoral Legislation

In the wake of the mass demonstrations which emerged in protest against the results of the elections to the State Duma in 2011, radical changes to electoral and party registration laws were adopted in spring 2012 which made it much easier for parties to register and participate in elections (see Ross, 2014). According to these amendments the number of party members required for registration was drastically reduced from 40,000 to 500!¹ As a result of this new legislation, the total number of parties rose sharply from 7 in December 2011 to 78 by September 2015. Here it would appear that there was a move from one extreme (too few parties) to another (too many parties) and that this was a deliberate strategy of the Kremlin to

¹ Russian Federation, Federal Law No. 28, 2 April 2012.

keep the opposition weak and fragmented. In addition, changes to the rules governing registering for elections stipulated that party list candidates no longer needed to submit nomination signatures, and the maximum number of signatures required by independent candidates was lowered from 2% to 0.5%.² In previous elections scores of opposition candidates and party lists were denied registration because the regional electoral commissions declared their nomination signatures invalid (see Ross 2011 and 2011a). The new election rules now made it much easier for parties to register for elections.

The Counter-Reform of 2013-4

Unfortunately, these reforms did not last long as the mass protest movement lost momentum and gradually fizzled out, and the Putin regime began to feel more secure. In 2013 and 2014 a series of amendments were quickly pushed through the Duma which has led to a re-tightening of the Kremlin's reigns over the election process and the abolition of many of the reforms adopted in 2012. These new laws changed the situation so drastically that scholars of Russian politics refer to them as "party counter-reforms" (Borisov, Korgunuk, Lyubarev, and Mikhaleva 2015).³

In May 2014 the requirement of party list candidates to collect nomination signatures was reinstated, although the percentage of signatures required was lowered from 2% to 0.5% of the regional electorate. In sharp contrast, for candidates in the single mandate elections, the number of required signatures was raised from 0.5 to 3%.⁴ Whilst these electoral thresholds are

² Russian Federation, Federal Law No. 41, 2 May 2012.

³ Russian Federation, Federal Law No. 95, 5 May 2014, 'O vnesenii izmenenii v Federal'nyi zakon, "Ob osnovnykh grantiyakh izbiratel'nykh prav i prava na uchastie v referndume grazhdan RF."

⁴ Ibid.

not particularly high, the reintroduction of nomination signatures gave the electoral commissions the opportunity to deny opposition parties entry to the elections. Candidates have been denied registration in the past, because they wrote the date or signed their name in the wrong place on their nomination forms, or because they used the wrong colour of pen or because of other trivial mistakes made by the collectors of the signatures (Ross, 2011, 648).

Moreover, there was no level playing field in the nomination process. Parties which held seats or received 3% of the votes in elections to the State Duma, were exempt from gathering signatures. This meant that the four Duma parliamentary parties; United Russia (*Edinaya Rossiya*, UR), the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (*Kommunisticheskaya Partiya Rossiiskoi Federatsiya*, CPRF), The Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (*Liberal'no Demokraticheskaya Partiya Rossii*, LDPR), and Just Russia (*Spravedlivaya Rossiya*, JR) qualified for the regional elections by default, as did Yabloko (*Rossiiskaya Ob'edinennaya Demokraticheskaya Partiya YABLOKO*), which won 3.4% of the votes in the Duma elections of 2011.⁵ A total of 28.2% of candidates were denied registration in the 2014 elections (Kynev, Lyubarev and Maximov 2015, p.182) and 20.7% in 2015 (Kynev, Lyubarev and Maximov 2015a, pp. 18-19) However, for those parties which did not need to submit nomination signatures, the corresponding figures were much smaller, just 3.9% and 2.1% respectively, whilst for those parties which had to collect signatures, the numbers denied registration were much higher, comprising 74.2% in 2014 (Kynev, Lyubarev and Maximov 2015, p. 182) and 89.4% in 2015 (Kynev, Lyubarev and Maximov 2015a, pp. 18-19)

⁵ Parties which hold seats in, or win 3% of the votes in regional assemblies, or 0.5% of the total number of seats in a region's municipal councils, are also exempt from submitting signatures in those particular regions, and this allowed a number of other opposition parties (such as, Patriots of Russia and Just Cause), to compete in a few regions without submitting signatures.

Of the 7 registered parties which competed in elections to the State Duma in December 2011, four were successful in gaining representation; the “ruling” UR party, the CPRF, the LDPR and JR. The latter three parties will hereafter be referred to as the “parliamentary opposition”. Three other parties – Yabloko, Patriots of Russia (*Patrioty Rossii* PR), and Right Cause (*Pravoe Delo* RC) which did not have seats in the parliament in 2011 – may be labelled the “old non-parliamentary parties”. The pro-forma, Republican Party of Russia – People’s Freedom Party (*Respublikanskaya Partiya Rossiiskoi Federatsii-Partiya Narodnoi Svobody* RPR-PARNAS), should also be attributed to this category as it was first registered in 2002 (it lost its registration in 2007 and won it back again in 2012).

2. Changes in the levels of party contestation and party saturation of regional legislatures

47 regional legislatures were elected over the period 2012-15: 6 in 2012, 16 in 2013, 14 in 2014, and 11 in 2015.⁶ An analysis of these campaigns and their results can help us uncover important trends in the development of the Russian party system. The main data characterising the 2012-15 elections are represented in Table 1.⁷

⁶ Legislation adopted in November 2013 lowered the minimum percentage of members of regional legislatures that were required to be elected on the basis of proportional representation from 50% to 25% and the requirement to use the PR system was lifted completely for elections to the Moscow City Duma and the St. Petersburg City Council.

⁷ The level of inter-party competition in elections to regional legislatures was measured with the help of the following indicators: 1. For elections: the number of nominated and registered party lists in each region; the share of votes received by the largest party; the effective number of electoral parties (ENP_E) for each region (in all regions as a whole – a range and an average value). ENP_E was calculated by the Laakso-Taagepera formula $N_2 = \frac{1}{\sum_{i=1}^n p_i^2} = \left(\sum_{i=1}^n p_i^2 \right)^{-1}$ where p_i is the share of the total number of valid

[Table 1 about here]

Nomination and Registration of Parties

As can be seen in Table 1, 23 parties had the right to participate in the 2012 regional elections. The number of those who nominated party lists, varied from 11 in Penza and Sakhalin oblasts to 18 in North Ossetia. By 2013 the number of parties seeking participation in the elections had risen to 47 and the number of party lists ranged from 10 to 23. In 2014, despite the increasing number of parties, their electoral activity fell steeply. Under the new stricter registration procedures, just 39 of the 69 parties nominated their lists, and their level of participation varied from 7 to 15. In 2015, 36 parties nominated party lists (*Regional'nye vybory...* 2015, p. 18), and the number of party lists varied from 9 to 18.

Turning to the registration of party lists, the liberalisation of registration rules in 2012 led to a rise in the average number of party lists in each region from 13.2 in 2012 to 17.2 in 2013. However, as a result of the reinstatement of the requirement to gather nomination signatures, the average number of registered parties fell to 9.3 in 2014 and 7.7 in 2015 (see Table 1).

Voting for United Russia and the Opposition

votes received by a party (Laakso, Taagepera 1979). However, the Laakso and Taagepera's ENP has some disadvantages, particularly for the measurement of dominant party systems (such as Russia), as their method overemphasises the weight of minor parties. In order to eliminate this problem, we have also calculated the values of ENP using an alternative formula ENP_E proposed by Golosov (2010): $N_p = \sum_{i=1}^x \frac{S_i}{S_i + S_1^2 - S_i^2}$, where x is a total number of parties in the system, S_i – the share of votes received by a party, S_1 – the share of the party winning first place at the election (see Table 3).

As can be seen in Table 2, UR won a majority of the party list votes in 33 of the 46 regional elections, and over two thirds of the votes in 16 regions (see Table 2). The CPRF came second to UR in 28 regions and it was pushed into third place by the LDPR in 8 assemblies. The CPRF's highest share of votes was 25.7% (in Novosibirsk Oblast in 2015). LDPR came third in 28 regions and fourth in 18. Its highest level of support was 17.2% (in the Republic of Khakasiya in 2013). JR came third in 18 regions and fourth in 28, with its greatest success coming in the Republic of Sakha, in 2013 where it picked up 16.6% of the votes (see Table 2).

[Table 2 about here]

Levels of Contestation: effective number of electoral parties

The highest ENP_E scores according to the Laaskso-Taagepera formula were to be found in Arkhangelsk, Yaroslavl and Smolensk oblasts in 2013 (4.27, 4.27 and 4.22 respectively), whilst the lowest ENP_E was found in Kemerovo Oblast (1.31 in 2013). A total of 13 regions had a score of less than 2. According to the Golosov formula there were 28 regions with scores of less than 2. The highest was 3.32 in Arkhangelsk and the lowest, 1.16 in Kemerovo (see Table 3). In 2014, despite the sharp increase in the number of parties, ENP_E was less than 2, in 6 of the 13 regions (according to the Laakso-Taagepera formula), and less than 2 in 11 regions (according to the Golosov formula). Thus, the sharp rise in the number of registered parties did not raise the level of the inter-party competition. In 2015 the ENP_E exceeded 3 only in Kostroma and Novosibirsk oblasts (according to Laakso-Taagepera) whilst in Voronezh and Nenets AO it did not even reach 2 (see Table 3). According to the Golosov formula, 9 of the 11 regions had an ENP_E of less than two.

[Table of 4 about here]

Party representation in regional legislatures

Over the period 2012-15 the total number of parties represented in regional assemblies rose sharply from an average of 5 in 2012 to 14 in 2013 before falling back to 8 in 2014 and 5 in 2015 (see Table 1). As can be seen in Table 4, UR won a total average of 371 seats (81.3%). Moreover it won over 90% of the seats in half of the regional assemblies, and more than two thirds in all the other regions (with the exception of North Ossetia).⁸ The CPRF was second with a total average of 39 seats (8.5%), JR was third with 24 (4.3%) and the LDPR came last with 20 (5.2%). The 2015 elections led to the formation of non-competitive legislatures with poor representation of the opposition. In these elections UR won a total of 371 of the 456 seats (81.3%). The success rate of the other parliamentary parties was very modest. The CPRF won a total of just 39 seats (8.5%), more than half of them in Novosibirsk oblast. The LDPR won just 20 seats (4.3%) and Just Russia – 24 (5.2%), (see Table 4).

To sum up, the radical changes to party and electoral legislation in 2012 opened a "window of opportunity" for opposition parties to participate more fully in regional elections but throughout the period UR dominated all of the assemblies. Opposition parties were most successful in gaining entry to the elections in 2013 when the legislation governing the nomination and registration of candidates and party lists was most relaxed, and the level of electoral competition was relatively high. However, as demonstrated above, in 2014 the "window of opportunity" began to close and this trend continued in 2015, leading to a reduction in the number of party lists contesting the elections and a drop in the success rate of the parliamentary opposition parties.

⁸ Legislation adopted in May 2014 (see footnote 3) reduced the electoral threshold for the party list elections from 7 to 5% thus making it easier for some opposition parties to gain seats in some regional assemblies.

3. Identifying cleavages and changes in the cleavage structure.

Methodology of Research on Cleavages

The cleavage structure, which can be understood as interdependence between the social status of voters and their political preferences, constitutes the foundations of any party system. When Lipset and Rokkan in their path-breaking study (1967) formulated their cleavage theory, they kept in mind the evident differences in voting for parties with opposing ideologies in various territorial units.

As a rule, Lipset-Rokkan followers have dealt only with the most apparent cleavages dominating in the political space. But the cleavage structure of any society will also contain less visible cleavages. This problem is especially acute for countries with fluid and unstable party systems where every election produces new political actors. In such cases factor analysis comes to the rescue. Slider, Gimpelson and Chugrov (1994) used this method for detecting electoral cleavages⁹ in the Russian Duma election of 1993, Zarycki (1999, 2002) and Zarycki and Nowak (2000) employed it for parliamentary and presidential elections in Poland. But the conclusions of these studies have been brought into question due to the difficulties they encountered when they tried to work out the political and social explanators for the “electoral cleavages.”

It was relatively easy to find the socio-demographic background of electoral cleavages. Slider et al. (1994), Zarycki (1999, 2002) and Zarycki and Nowak (2000) compared factor

⁹ By the term 'electoral cleavage' we understand the differentiation of electoral preferences empirically fixed at every single election. In order to be recognized as a 'full' cleavage according to Bartolini and Mair's interpretation (1990), an electoral cleavage must be repeated several times; also, its close links to certain political parties and the political values of significant groups of voters must be demonstrated.

scores of electoral cleavages with the social, demographic and economic indicators for every region using correlation analysis. Akhremenko (2007) also applied linear regression analysis. Korgunyk (2014 and 2015) developed a new approach which entails subjecting the entire set of demographic and socioeconomic indicators to factor analysis which provides a complete picture of social stratification in a society; scores for the stratifying factors are then compared further with electoral cleavages through linear regression analysis.

However, it is much more difficult to interpret electoral cleavages politically in those countries where the number of contestants is high and volatile. This problem does not exist in the party systems of Western countries which generally have a smaller number of participants. As a rule, the picture of political contestation here, is clear and understandable. Where the electoral system is fluid and there is a high turnover of parties in each election cycle, it makes more sense to compare the electoral cleavage structure with political cleavages.

The study of 'political cleavages' is well-developed and the use of factor analysis is common practice. (Evans & Whitefield, 1998; Moreno, 1999; Kitschelt et al., 1999; Whitefield, 2002; König, Marbach, and Osnabrügge, 2013; Dalton and McAllister, 2015). However, a key problem with the existing studies, is the fact that they have to rely on public opinion polls and expert surveys for their data. Such an approach has its drawbacks. As Stoll points out, factor analysis of public or political elite opinion data usually relies 'upon the analyst selecting a relevant set of issues for consideration' (Stoll, 2004, p. 45). As a result, researches not only study the issues but also help to form the final picture.

Moreover, the political preferences of voters often do not exist in a prepared form. They are created in dialogue between the electorate and political actors during electoral campaigns. Thus, what political actors express is a product of the joint work of the politicians and the voters. Therefore, if the task is to understand why citizens vote for certain parties, it is necessary

to study all of the electoral campaign materials, rather than the opinions of experts, or just party programmes. This method helps us to highlight issues raised by political actors that are of interest to voters and that excite the liveliest discussion among contestants.

The next step is to identify the position of every contestant on every issue using a scale from –5 to +5. The range of issues examined in this study varied from ideological to situational. The main criteria employed in selecting the sample were; (1) the issues were discussed by the most active actors and (2) the presence of extreme positions – from total support (+5) to complete denial (-5); point ‘zero’ corresponds either to a centrist position or to a complete absence of the position. While formulating issues, preference was given to the original statements of parties and their representatives. While identifying the position of every contestant on every issue, only statements of parties and their representatives were taken into account (we do not include expert assessments). In the cases of inner-party dissent, the score takes into account the political ‘weight’ of the ‘speakers’.

Examples of our estimates of party positions can be seen in the table 5.¹⁰ The subject of the sample issue is ‘attitudes to President Putin’. We can see that almost all parties have a clear-cut position here: most of them fully supported the president (their score is +5), only the liberal parties, Yabloko and PARNAS strongly condemn Putin’s policies in all spheres (thus they receive -5). The Communist Party of the Russian Federation supports the foreign policy of Putin but condemns the socioeconomic course of his government; so it receives a score of zero. A party functionary of the party, ‘Communist Party of Russia: Communists of Russia’ (*Kommunisticheskaya Partiya. Kommunisty Rossii*) called Putin ‘the President of capitalists

¹⁰ This is a reduced form of the original table employed in the study, which is presented here only as an illustration of the method employed.

and oligarchs', but, unlike Ziuganov and other CPRF leaders, he stated this just once, and no one else in the party dared to repeat this again; thus the party's position was assessed as -1.

[Table 5 about here]

The scores of parties on every issue are then subjected to factor analysis. The factors discovered in this process can be considered as 'political cleavages'. Their factor loadings must be compared with those of electoral cleavages by correlation analysis. If the correlation is significant ($R \geq 0.5$) it means that the electoral cleavage has political content.

The methodology described above allows us to capture variations in the type and strength of cleavages even in highly unstable and volatile party systems, such as Russia. We stress the political dimension of cleavage formation. Parties not only reflect social divisions they also play a key role in their manufacture. In contrast to the sociological approach of Lipset and Rokkan which sees party systems primarily as expressions of different social divisions we prefer the approach of Mainwaring and Torcal who argue that whilst, there is, a complex interaction between political factors and the social context, it is politics which is primarily 'responsible for creating, transforming, deepening or diffusing specific social and economic conflicts' (2000, p. 5).

Our methodological approach allows us to evaluate the level of political competition for each region which participated in the 2012-15 rounds of regional elections. A higher number of political and electoral cleavages and the possibility to interpret electoral cleavages politically and socially indicates, if not the presence of higher levels of competition, then an easing of the administrative pressure on voters. On the other hand, a smaller number of cleavages and the absence of links between electoral and political cleavages, as well as between electoral cleavages and stratification factors, indicates lower levels of competition. If the primary

electoral cleavages have no predictors among the stratification factors, this would suggest the presence of electoral fraud.

The electoral data for subsequent sections were taken from the official website of the Central Election Commission (<http://www.cikrf.ru>); demographic and socioeconomic data from the website of the Federal State Statistics Service (<http://www.gks.ru>) as well as from the Database of Municipal Indicators of the Federal State Statistics Service (<http://www.gks.ru/dbscripts/munst>). The campaign materials (party programmes, leaflets, speeches and interviews of party leaders and activists, etc.) were compiled from the PartArchive Database (<http://www.indem.ru/pa98>). Several thousand documents (party programmes, leaflets, interviews, etc.) were analysed for each election campaign. For example, about 5000 documents were examined for the 2015 regional campaigns.

Variations in the structure of political cleavages

What political cleavages are present in post-communist Russia? For all Duma elections from 1993 to 2011 there were just three such cleavages, regardless of the number of participants: (1) socio-economic, (2) authoritarian–democratic and (3) systemic (Korgunyuk, 2014). The first, which is also known as the left-right cleavage, is familiar to all scholars who study cleavages. The authoritarian–democratic cleavage is no longer applicable to Western democracies, but this is not the case for some of the post-communist countries of Central and Easter Europe, and some countries in Latin America (Moreno, 1999; Torcal & Mainwaring, 2002; Stoll, 2004, p. 44).

The third cleavage, the systemic political cleavage, appears, as a rule, only in those countries undergoing transition. In the 1990s, such a dimension existed in the political space of post-communist polities of Eastern and Central Europe (it reflected the attitude of citizens to the political and economic reforms) and in some countries of Latin America - the so-called

liberal–fundamentalist dimension (Kitschelt, 1995; Moreno, 1999; Stoll, 2004, p. 44; Clemente, 2009). In Russia, the systemic political cleavage comprises issues from the socio-economic and authoritarian–democratic agendas and it is considered to be a sound indicator of the general direction of the country’s political development.

This threefold structure of political cleavages looks quite “archaic” from a western perspective. The authoritarian–democratic cleavage lost its salience in Western Europe after World War II, and for Eastern and Central Europe – at the beginning of the 2000s. As for the systemic cleavage, it is specific, as a rule, for transitioning societies and its presence indicates a high level of political polarization - the main actors do not gravitate towards the centre but repel each other, and by this method they “stretch” the political space.

Changes in the balance of power between opposite political forces can make the system quite unstable. Nevertheless, the structure of political cleavages and their hierarchy has been relatively stable for the Duma elections (1993-2011): the socio-economic cleavage almost always came first, the systemic – second, and the authoritarian–democratic – third (the only exception was the 1993-election, where the position of the socio-economic cleavage and the systemic factor was reversed: the latter had a higher eigenvalue than the former). But the cleavage structure underwent a change in the 2012-15 round of regional elections. The party reforms of 2012 led to a sharp increase in the number of parties which have the right to participate in elections. As a result, in 2012-13 the number of 'political cleavages' rose above three in many regions. The reason was that many new parties were spoiler or niche projects and did not take part in the national political discussion, so their positions on most issues could be evaluated only with a mark of ‘zero.’

If we limit the number of contestants to only those parties which took an active part in national political debates, the political space acquires a three-dimensional form again, but the

hierarchy of the political cleavages changes: for elections to regional legislatures in 2012–13, the authoritarian–democratic cleavage came first (United Russia versus all other participants), the socio-economic cleavage second, and the systemic third. This shift can be explained if we take into consideration the fact that a prominent issue which rose to the surface in 2012–13 was related to Putin’s crackdown on the non-systemic opposition movement, and his assault on civil society. Not surprisingly, therefore the authoritarian–democratic cleavage acquired a leading position (Korgunuk, 2015).

The political space changed even more radically in 2014. The crisis in Ukraine posited a systemic political cleavage – between imperialists (the overwhelming majority of the Russian parties) and anti-imperialists (exclusively liberals). The imperialists welcomed the ‘repatriation’ of Crimea and they referred to the Ukrainian authorities, as a ‘junta’, and ‘fascists’. On the contrary, the anti-imperialists condemned the ‘annexation’ of Crimea and insisted that Russia was waging an undeclared war against Ukraine. This cleavage reflected most clearly the confrontation between the Westerners and “*Samobytniki*” (people who advocate a non-Western path of Russia’s development). The authoritarian–democratic and socio-economic cleavages were pushed into second and third places (Korgunuk, 2015).

In 2015, the factor analysis of the issue positions of seven parties (UR, LDPR, CPRF, JR, Yabloko, PR, RPR-PARNAS) revealed only two political cleavages. The first was “imperialistic” (systemic). The greatest confrontation was generated by the “Ukrainian” issues but there were also debates over abolishing the so-called “state corporations” and repealing the law on “NGOs-Foreign Agents”: the liberal leading parties, Yabloko and PARNAS parties were pro, all the others – contra (Table 6). Thus, the systemic cleavage went beyond the foreign policy agenda and included domestic-political and socio-economic agendas. As for the second political cleavage, it can be interpreted as “authority vs opposition”. The political issues

("Attitudes to municipal reforms", "Cancelling the municipal filter in gubernatorial elections") were mixed up with socioeconomic factors ("The government's anti-crisis plan is ineffective", "Real social budget expenditures are being reduced"), (Table 7).

[Tables 6 and 7 about here]

In addition to the seven parties noted above, there were 8 additional parties which received more than 1% of the votes in the PR system in September 13, 2015. If we add these parties to our analysis, a third political cleavage can be detected which may be characterized as socioeconomic, or, more precisely, as a hybrid of the socioeconomic and the authoritarian-democratic cleavages.

The main participators of this divide were the CPRF and Communists of Russia, on the one hand, and Civic Platform, Right Cause and the Green Party, on the other (Chart 1). The main areas of contestation were the "nationalisation of essential industries", "cancelling the Universal State Examination", "state regulation of prices", on the one hand, and "support for Putin", "attitudes towards the municipal reforms", on the other. But this three-dimensionality owes its existence to the large number of 'zeros' in the positions of Civic Platform, Right Cause and the Green Party which acted as spoiler projects. Moreover, there were no regions where all 15 parties participated in the same elections together, so the existence of this cleavage is purely hypothetical.

Overall, we can state that over the period 2012-15 the structure of political cleavages moved out of balance, and this imbalance grew especially fast in 2014-15. Over the period 1995-2011, the hierarchy of political cleavages remained stable: the socioeconomic cleavage held first place, the systemic one – came second, the authoritarian–democratic – third. In 2012, the relatively "archaic" authoritarian–democratic cleavage pushed the socioeconomic cleavage into second place. Then, in 2014, the "Ukrainian" cleavage (systemic in its essence) came to

the fore – its emergence was a consequence of the acute polarization which emerged around the Crimea-Ukrainian issues, where there was no middle position – only full support for Putin or strong condemnation Putin and his policies.

Finally, in 2015 the number of political cleavages was reduced to two. But these were not the cleavages found in advanced industrial countries (economic left–right and materialism–post-materialism – see Moreno, 1999). The first, “Ukrainian”, cleavage was of a systemic nature, whilst the second had an authoritarian–democratic character and absorbed completely the socioeconomic cleavage. This structure of political cleavages can be considered highly abnormal, and peculiar to crisis situations.

The number and types of political cleavages in the regions

In 2012 there were four political cleavages in five regions and three in Penza oblast. In 2013 the number of cleavages varied from two in Kemerovo oblast and Khakassia, to five in Ivanovo, Irkutsk and Yaroslavl oblasts (see tables 7 and 8). After the Kremlin's return to the ‘optimization’ of electoral participation in 2014 (that is, the forced withdrawal from the elections of some opposition candidates), the number of ‘political cleavages’ decreased sharply. There were three cleavages in four regions and only two in nine others. Finally, there were only two political cleavages everywhere in 2015 (see tables 9 and 10). In Magadan oblast, where only six parties participated in the election, the requirement to exclude all factors with the eigenvalue <0 left a single cleavage; but by reducing the cut-off to 0.98 allowed a second cleavage to emerge.

In 2012-13, the primary political cleavage was authoritarian-democratic in all regions. More precisely, not so much authoritarian-democratic as ‘authority vs opposition’. Authoritarian-democratic issues (“attitudes to the party reforms”, “cancelling the municipal filter in the gubernatorial elections”) were mixed with socioeconomic (“freezing of housing

and utility tariffs”, “return to a progressive income tax”). In 2013 some issues from the systemic “kit” were wedged into this cleavage: “the right of citizens to carry handguns”, “constitutional recognition of the state-forming status of ethnic Russians”.

As for the second political cleavage, in 2012 it had socioeconomic features in four regions and in two it owed its existence to “spoiler” parties (more precisely, to “zeros” in their positions). Features of socioeconomic cleavage were also detected in the fourth political cleavage in four regions. The third electoral cleavage in all six regions, with the exception of Sakhalin, was mostly systemic (Table 8).

[Table 8 about here]

In 2013, the second political cleavage had a predominantly systemic nature in all 16 regions but with the domination of the authoritarian-democratic features in three oblasts, and socioeconomic in the rest of regions.

A systemic character was peculiar to the third cleavage in all of the regions with the exception of regions with only two political cleavages, and also in Bashkortostan, Rostov oblast, and Trans-Baikal krai (here it had no interpretation due to large number of new parties with many zeros in their issue positions). The fourth political cleavage was present in six regions, but only in Arkhangelsk oblast could it be identified as systemic, in the other five regions it owed its existence to the spoiler or niche parties. A similar point can also be made about the fifth cleavage in Ivanovo and Yaroslavl oblasts.

In 2014-15, the primary political cleavage in all the regions was “Ukrainian”, “imperialistic”. The second cleavage in 2014 had a mixed nature – with a predominance of socioeconomic features in Crimea and Sevastopol - and authoritarian-democratic in the other regions. The third political cleavage was found in four regions; it had a mixed structure – with the predominance of authoritarian-democratic features in Crimea and socioeconomic features

in the remaining regions. In 2015, the second political cleavage had a mixed nature (systemic but not “Ukrainian”) with the prevalence of socioeconomic features in Belgorod and Voronezh oblasts and authoritarian-democratic in the other regions.

Thus, the Russian authorities have mastered the art of manipulation with a number of political cleavages in every single region. Depending on the aims pursued, they can either increase this number (if the aim was to confuse the voter) or diminish it (if the aim was to limit choice). In 2012-13, the aim was more often to disorientate the voter, and the appearance of many new parties made it impossible to comprehend the picture, not only for ordinary voters, but also for political scientists armed with statistical tools.

In 2014-15, the goal was, on the contrary, to limit the choice of the voter. “inconvenient” parties were not allowed to participate in the elections. Thus, we find that the cleavage structure in all regions acquired a minimalist character.

Variations in the structure of electoral cleavages

The 2012 elections

The first effects of the party reform were felt already in the 2012 elections. The number of electoral cleavages with eigenvalue ≥ 1 increased in comparison to the Duma election of 2011 in 3 of 6 regions: from 2 to 3 in Saratov and Sakhalin oblasts and from 3 to 5 in North Ossetia¹¹ (see Table 9). The reason for this were the growing number of political cleavages (which rose from 3 to 4 in all regions except Penza oblast) and the reduced administrative pressure on voters, evidenced by a drop in turnout (by 22 per cent on average).

¹¹ It is important to recall that factor analysis detected in the 2011 Duma Election a single electoral cleavage in 4 regions, 2 cleavages in 52 regions, 3 in 26, and 4 in just one - Yekaterinburg oblast (see Korgunyuk, 2015).

[Table 9 about here]

In all 6 regions with the exception of North Ossetia, the primary electoral cleavage was strongly correlated with the authoritarian-democratic political cleavage. It was a typical “authority against community” cleavage which has been dominant in post-Soviet Russia since the 2003 Duma Election. In Udmurtia, North Ossetia and Penza oblast this electoral cleavage was conditioned by the level of urbanization (the most influential stratification factor in most regions¹²), whilst in Krasnodar krai and Saratov oblast – social factors had no influence (this can be interpreted as an evidence of massive electoral fraud in these regions).

A strong socioeconomic political character was peculiar only to the second electoral cleavage in Udmurtiya, Krasnodar krai and Penza oblast. Here it was also socially conditioned (in Krasnodar krai – even by the level of urbanization).

The most interesting case in the 2012 elections was North Ossetia. Here the first electoral cleavage represented the competition between United Russia and Patriots of Russia which was more of a reflection of competition between regional elite groups, than between the “authorities” and the “community”. This electoral cleavage was socially conditioned by the level of urbanization – all other electoral cleavages in the region had no social background. Nevertheless, North Ossetia can be considered the only region where the level of electoral competition grew in comparison to the 2011 Duma election.¹³

The 2013 elections

¹² On the hierarchy of stratification factors, see Korgunyuk 2015, pp. 469-470.

¹³ For a classification of Russian regions, depending on the level of competition, see Korgunyuk 2015, pp. 472-76.

The 2013 elections experienced the greatest effects of the party reform. The number of electoral cleavages varied this year from two to six.

Everywhere, except for three regions, the first electoral cleavage had strong a correlation with the authoritarian-democratic political cleavage. In Arkhangelsk and Yaroslavl oblasts the reason for such weak correlation was, most likely, the large number of spoiler projects: voters perceived them as allies, not opponents of the authorities. In Khakassia, the first electoral cleavage reflected more of a confrontation between various local clans than rival political forces.

The socioeconomic political cleavage made itself known in 10 regions: in 8 of them it has strong correlations with the second electoral cleavage. In Smolensk and Vladimir oblasts, electoral cleavages had links to the systemic political cleavage. As for the social base, the first electoral cleavage (“authority against community”) was socially conditioned in 15 regions, in 12 of them – by the level of urbanization in company with other stratification factors. But in Rostov oblast it had no predictors which alerts us to the presence of mass ballot stuffing in favour of United Russia.

In 9 of 10 cases (with the exception of Ulyanovsk oblast) electoral cleavages with socioeconomic political content had a social background; in three cases it was the level of urbanization. A significant share of electoral cleavages in Arkhangelsk (4), Vladimir (6), Ivanovo (4), Irkutsk (5) and Yaroslavl (4) oblasts had no political interpretation (in Yaroslavl oblast – none at all). This shows that the large number of new and unfamiliar parties made the political space non-transparent for the electorate and disoriented it.

The 2014 elections

In the 2014 elections, the first effects of the “party counter-reforms” were felt. The number of electoral cleavages in 13 regions¹⁴ varied from one (Tatarstan) to five (Republic of Altai) (Table 9).

The first electoral cleavage had a strong correlation with the authoritarian-democratic political cleavage everywhere with the exception of the Republic of Altai (politics in this region are determined mainly by patrimonial clan rivalries), Crimea and Sevastopol. In Tatarstan, Mari El, Karachay-Cherkessia, this electoral cleavage also had close links to the “Ukrainian” political cleavage, in Crimea – also with the socioeconomic ‘political cleavage. But traces of the socioeconomic political cleavage were found only in two cases (other than Crimea) – in the second electoral cleavage in Bryansk oblast and in the fourth one in the Republic of Altai. Of course, this political cleavage could show up only in those four regions where the three political cleavages took place.

As for the social base of electoral cleavages, a regression model was built only for 10 regions: there are no necessary socio-demographic data for Crimea and Sevastopol; as for Nenets AO, it includes only two municipalities which is too few for the calculation.

The first electoral cleavage had no links to stratification factors in Karachay-Cherkessia, Kabardino-Balkaria (as was the case in 2011) and Bryansk oblast (unlike in 2011). It was conditioned by the level urbanization (often together with other stratification factors) in 6 of 10 regions. The level of urbanization also conditioned the second electoral cleavage in 5 regions and the third one in Volgograd oblast. But only in Bryansk oblast could this cleavage be interpreted as a socioeconomic political cleavage. It was a clear sign of the growing impoverishment of the cleavage structure.

¹⁴ Moscow has to be excluded from the analysis because the election to the City Duma was held exclusively in single-member districts.

The 2015 elections

In 2015, the tendency to reduce the number of electoral cleavages continued. This time the highest number of electoral cleavages was three– which was the case in 4 regions. There were only two electoral cleavages in 6 regions, and just one – in Voronezh oblast. As before, the first electoral cleavage had a strong correlation with the authoritarian-democratic political cleavage in all the regions; in four regions it was combined with the “Ukrainian” political divide. Because of the absorption of the socioeconomic political cleavage by the authoritarian-democratic cleavage (termed, “authority-oppositional”), we can find its traces in not a single electoral cleavage. So, the second and third electoral cleavages were deprived of any political content almost everywhere.

The connection between electoral cleavages and stratification factors also declined. The level of urbanization conditioned electoral cleavages only in five regions – in comparison in 2014 it had no trace only in 1 of the 10 cases analysed. None of the electoral cleavages had a social base in Kurgan oblast and Nenets AO. Only the third cleavage was conditioned socially in Magadan oblast.

In summary, we can observe a significant simplification of the cleavage structure and a decline in the level of political competition in the 2015 elections. In comparison to the 2011 Duma election, a widening of political competition can only be found in Kaluga oblast – which was most likely connected to the wider number of contestants.

Conclusion

The party reform of 2012 stimulated the emergence of new political parties and the re-activation of the current ones. But increasing electoral competition did not shake the domination of United Russia in the regional legislatures. Moreover, the space of inter-party competition narrowed significantly in some places. In addition, the emergence of new parties

led to the ousting of the parliamentary opposition and independent deputies from a number of legislatures.

Nevertheless, over the period 2012-13 the growth of inter-party competition, coupled with a slight increase in party fragmentation, led to an augmentation of the political space and a rise in the number of electoral cleavages. Moreover, the hierarchy of political cleavages changed markedly in comparison to the 2011 Duma election: the authoritarian-democratic cleavage (the third in 1995-2011) came first, the socioeconomic one (the first earlier) became the second, the systemic (the second) – was third. It was a first sign of the unbalancing of the political cleavage structure, if we assume that the primary place of the socioeconomic cleavage is a key determinant of its equilibrium.

Lower voting for United Russia combined with the growing activity of the opposition, were interpreted by the Kremlin as a threat to political stability. Thus, we witnessed the party counter-reforms of 2013-14 which reduced the opportunities of opposition candidates, even those from the loyal parliamentary opposition.

The number of parties represented in the regional legislatures fell in 2014-15 to almost pre-reform levels, and the presence of the opposition became symbolic in many assemblies. The authorities succeeded in strengthening the position of United Russia by fragmenting the opposition. The existing party system was conserved by creating spoiler projects which were designed to imitate genuine inter-party competition.

The trend towards an ever greater tightening up of entry requirements for contestation in the elections led to a lowering of the number of political and, consequently, electoral cleavages, in addition to a reformatting of the political space. The “Ukrainian” political cleavage came to the fore, whilst the socioeconomic and authoritarian cleavages merged into one. This trend was especially evident in 2015 when the third political cleavage was not found

in a single region. But these developments did not lead to changes in the political essence of the first electoral cleavage which almost everywhere preserved its “authority” vs “opposition” characteristic. But the political degradation of the second and other electoral cleavages was clear. Whilst in 2012-13 the majority of the second cleavages and some of the third could be recognized as socioeconomic, only two electoral cleavages could be interpreted this way in 2014, and none in 2015.

This study also demonstrates that there was a marked decline in the social base of the electoral cleavages. The most influential stratification factor – the level of urbanization – conditioned the first electoral cleavage in 12 of 16 regions in 2013, but only in 3 of 12 in 2015. Moreover, the number of regions increased where electoral cleavages had no connection to the levels of social stratification. All these trends indicate a growing divergence between the political and electoral spaces. This can be explained by a certain inertia of the voters, but also by an imbalance of the political system which may be interpreted as a sign of an impending political crisis.

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Table 1. Main Indicators of Elections to Regional Legislatures in 2012-15

Indicator	Date of elections			
	October 14th, 2012	September 8, 2013	September 14, 2014	September 13, 2015
Number of parties having nominated party lists	23	47	39	36
Average number of registered party lists in a region	13.2	17.2	9.3	7.8
Average voting in favour of United Russia, %	62.33	54.14	66.49	61.02
Average ENP _E (Laakso–Taagepera formula)	2.45	3.14	2.19	2.46
Average ENP _E (Golosoov formula)	1.93	2.42	1.72	1.92
Total number of parties having representation in legislatures	5	14	8	5
Average share of Seats won by United Russia in a legislature, %	83.5	78.5	85.7	81.3

Source: Calculated by the authors from data provided by the official website of the Central Election Commission: <http://www.cikrf.ru> (last accessed 12 March 2016).

Table 2. Results of Party List Voting in Regional Elections, 2012–15

Year	Region	Voting for parties, %				
		UR	CPRF	LDPR	JR	Other Parties
2012	Republic of North Ossetia	45.4	10.8	1.4	7.4	35.0
	Republic of Udmurtia	54.7	17.7	10.4	5.2	12.0
	Krasnodar Krai	70.8	9.2	4.7	4.2	11.1
	Penza oblast	72.0	12.8	4.7	2.9	7.6
	Sakhalin oblast	51.9	19.0	8.7	7.4	13.0
	Saratov oblast	79.1	8.4	2.9	5.1	4.5
2013	Republic of Bashkortostan	77.0	11.9	3.8	2.9	4.4
	Republic of Buryatia	45.2	20.2	6.4	9.4	19.2
	Republic of Kalmykia	52.4	11.6	2.7	4.6	28.7
	Republic of Sakha	49.2	13.3	6.5	16.6	14.4
	Republic of Khakassia	48.1	14.9	17.2	4.1	15.7
	Chechen republic	86.1	0.2	0.1	7.3	6.3
	Trans-Baikal Krai	44.9	14.8	13.6	10.9	15.8
	Arkhangelsk oblast	42.6	13.5	12.9	10.9	20.1
	Vladimir oblast	46.3	14.2	10.4	7.3	21.8
	Ivanovo oblast	57.2	14.9	7.2	4.5	16.2
	Irkutsk oblast	43.7	19.5	11.6	4.2	21.0
	Kemerovo oblast	87.3	2.6	4.0	1.9	4.2
	Rostov oblast	63.7	15.0	4.8	8.1	8.4
	Smolensk oblast	42.5	15.6	14.0	7.9	20.0
	Ulyanovsk oblast	59.8	14.6	7.5	3.1	15.0
	Yaroslavl oblast	44.6	11.7	5.4	10.2	28.1
2014*	Republic of Altai	46.2	12.5	7.7	8.0	25.6
	Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria	65.3	11.6	5.1	11.5	6.5
	Republic of Karachay-Cherkessia	73.4	9.7	5.1	6	5.8
	Republic of Crimea	72.8	4.7	8.8	1.9	11.8
	Republic of Mari El	66.7	14.1	8.4	2.3	8.5
	Republic of Tatarstan	84.9	5.6	2.4	3.7	3.4
	Republic of Tuva	85.6	3.4	1.5	5.0	4.5
	Khabarovsk Krai	59.2	14.6	13.8	3.8	8.6
	Bryansk oblast	73.7	9.3	5.4	2.9	8.7
	Volgograd oblast	62.3	14.9	8.5	5.4	8.9
	Tula oblast	67.5	12.1	8.9	3.7	7.8
	Sevastopol	78.0	3.8	7.5	1.9	8.8
	Nenets AD	47.5	20.1	11.2	4.1	17.1
2015	Komi Republic	60.4	7.7	12.1	10.4	9.4
	Belgorod oblast	63.7	13.4	6.9	8.4	7.6
	Chelyabinsk oblast	58.6	12.2	10.5	16.6	2.1
	Kaluga oblast	59.8	10.3	11.0	8.1	10.8
	Kostroma oblast	52.7	15.0	8.9	11.5	11.9
	Kurgan oblast	58.3	13.6	14.0	11.2	2.9
	Magadan oblast	59.9	11.9	10.3	14.1	3.8

	Novosibirsk oblast	46.8	25.7	10.8	11.2	5.5
	Ryazan oblast	64.2	13.3	8.4	8.8	5.3
	Voronezh oblast	75.4	11.1	6.2	5.6	1.7
	Yamal-Nenets AD	71.4	6.3	13.5	6.0	2.8

Source: Official website of the Central Election Commission: <http://www.cikrf.ru> (last accessed 12 March 2016). *Moscow City Duma in 2014 was elected fully by majoritarian votes in single member districts and thus is not included in this Table.

Key:

UR – United Russia

CPRF Party – Communist Party of the Russian Federation

LDPR – Liberal Democratic Party of Russia

JR – Just Russia

Table 3. Effective Number of Electoral Parties in Regional Elections, 2012-15

Regions	ENP _E (Laakso– Taagepera)	ENP _E (Golosov)	Regions	ENP _E (Laakso– Taagepera)	ENP _E (Golosov)
2012			2014		
Republic of North Ossetia	3.34	2.71	Republic of Altai	3.96	2.95
Sakhalin oblast	3.10	2.36	Nenets AD	3.47	2.65
Republic of Udmurtia	2.88	2.18	Khabarovsk Krai	2.53	1.93
Krasnodar Krai	1.94	1.53	Volgograd oblast	2.37	1.82
Penza oblast	1.86	1.48	Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria	2.18	1.69
Saratov oblast	1.57	1.31	Republic of Mari El	2.11	1.63
2013			Tula oblast	2.08	1.62
Arkhangelsk oblast	4.27	3.32	Republic of Crimea	1.85	1.48
Yaroslavl oblast	4.27	3.18	Bryansk oblast	1.79	1.44
Smolensk oblast	4.22	2.98	Republic of Karachay-Cherkessia	1.79	1.44
Irkutsk oblast	3.94	3.09	Sevastopol	1.62	1.34
Vladimir oblast	3.91	3.01	Republic of Tatarstan	1.38	1.20
Trans-Baikal Krai	3.87	3.00	Republic of Tuva	1.36	1.19
Republic of Buryatia	3.82	3.02	2015		
Republic of Khakassia	3.43	2.64	Novosibirsk oblast	3.23	2.55
Republic of Sakha	3.38	2.60	Kostroma oblast	3.13	2.18
Republic of Kalmykia	3.14	2.31	Kaluga oblast	2.56	1.94
Ivanovo oblast	2.78	2.18	Kurgan oblast	2.56	1.94
Ulyanovsk oblast	2.57	1.99	Komi Republic	2.51	1.90
Rostov oblast	2.28	1.77	Chelyabinsk oblast	2.50	1.91
Republic of Bashkortostan	1.64	1.35	Magadan oblast	2.50	1.88
Chechen republic	1.34	1.18	Belgorod oblast	2.27	1.76
Kemerovo oblast	1.31	1.16	Ryazan oblast	2.22	1.73
			Yamal-Nenets AD	1.85	1.49
			Voronezh oblast	1.69	1.39

Source: Calculated by the authors from data provided by the official website of the Central Election Commission: <http://www.cikrf.ru> (last accessed 12 March 2016).

Table 4. Party Composition of Regional Legislatures Elected in 2012–15

Year	Region	Number of seats (%)					
		UR	CPRF	LDPR	JR	Other Parties	Total No of Seats in Assembly
2012	Republic of North Ossetia	45	5	-	5	15	70
	Republic of Udmurtia	71	11	6	1	-	89
	Krasnodar Krai	95	5	-	-	-	100
	Penza oblast	23	2	-	-	-	25
	Sakhalin oblast	22	3	1	1	-	27
	Saratov oblast	34	1	-	1	-	36
	Total	290 (83.5%)	27 (7.7%)	10 (3.4%)	8 (2.7%)	15	347
2013	Republic of Bashkortostan	88	10	3	-	3	104
	Republic of Buryatia	45	8	1	6	2	62
	Republic of Kalmykia	18	4	-	-	3	25
	Republic of Sakha	51	5	1	9	1	67
	Republic of Khakassia	34	6	5	-	3	48
	Chechen republic	37	-	-	3	1	41
	Trans-Baikal Krai	36	4	4	4	-	48
	Arkhangelsk oblast	43	6	4	5	3	61
	Vladimir oblast	32	3	2	1	-	38
	Ivanovo oblast	22	2	1	-	1	26
	Irkutsk oblast	29	6	4	-	4	43
	Kemerovo oblast	44	-	1	1	-	46
	Rostov oblast	52	6	-	2	-	60
	Smolensk oblast	36	5	4	2	1	48
	Ulyanovsk oblast	31	4	1	-	-	36
	Yaroslavl oblast	39	4	1	3	3	50
	Total	549 (78.5%)	63 (9.0)	29 (4.1)	36 (5.1%)	25	699
2014	Republic of Altai	30	3	2	2	1	38
	Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria	50	8	2	8	2	70
	Republic of Karachay-Cherkessia	37	5	2	3	3	50
	Republic of Crimea	70	-	5	-	-	75
	Republic of Mari El	46	4	2	-	-	52
	Republic of Tatarstan	83	3	1	-	-	87
	Republic of Tuva	31	-	-	1	-	32
	Khabarovsk Krai	30	3	3	-	-	36
	Bryansk oblast	55	4	1	-	-	60
	Volgograd oblast	32	3	1	2	-	38
	Tula oblast	33	2	2	-	-	37
	Moscow*	28	5	1	-	1	35
	Sevastopol	22	-	2	-	-	24
	Nenets AD	13	3	1	-	2	19
	Total	650 (85.7)	43 (6.5%)	23 (3.5%)	16 (2.4)	9	653
2015	Komi Republic	26	1	1	2	-	30

	Belgorod oblast	42	3	2	2	-	49
	Voronezh oblast	51	3	1	1	-	56
	Kaluga oblast	31	4	2	2	-	39
	Kostroma oblast	28	3	1	2	1	35
	Kurgan oblast	28	2	2	2	-	34
	Magadan oblast	17	1	1	2	-	21
	Novosibirsk oblast	51	16	4	4	1	76
	Ryazan oblast	32	2	1	1	-	36
	Chelyabinsk oblast	47	3	3	5	-	58
	Yamal-Nenets AD	18	1	2	1	-	22
	Total	371 (81.3%)	39 (8.5%)	20 (4.3)	24 (5.2)	2	456

Source: Calculated with data provide by the official website of the Central Election Commission: <http://www.cikrf.ru> (last accessed 12 March 2016). *In this table we have included the results from Moscow City Duma which is elected fully in single mandate districts.

Table 5. Parties' attitudes to Vladimir Putin

Party	Position	Average rating (from -5 to +5)
United Russia	S. Govorukhin, a deputy of the State Duma: "In March 2000 he was elected the President. And I saw that for the first time in decades a very educated man, with amazing diligence, with an extraordinary memory, replaced those uneducated, even illiterate, people" (15.06.15)	5
Communist party of the RF	G. Ziuganov, the leader of CPRF: "The President formed the patriotic course in the foreign policy. This course must be conducted also in domestic policy. But Putin's government continues in its domestic policies to pursue an oligarchic, liberal course which is deadly for Russia" (20.01.15)	0
A Just Russia	V. Shudegov, a deputy of the State Duma: "Today Putin is one of the strongest leaders in the Globe who have done a lot for people and the Russian Army" (14.04.2015)	5
Liberal-Democratic Party of Russia	V. Zhirinovskii, the leader of LDPR: "He is better than El'tsin. He is better than Ziuganov, leader of the communists" (15.06.15)	5
Yabloko Party	A. Mel'nikov, a member of the Bureau of the Yabloko Party: "He drew Russia into war with Ukraine, he disgraced the Russian flag with the capture of Crimea, he dishonored the Russian Army with these acts, he molested our citizens through vile propaganda " (20.06.15)	-5
Patriots of Russia	N. Korneieva, deputy chairman of the Party: "Patriots of Russia will take part in the demonstration 21 February in order to express their support for President Putin" (20.02.15)	5
PARNAS	The anti-crisis program of PARNAS: "Many years of Putin's rule has brought the country to a standstill. ... Putin has no positive programme for Russia. The development of the country under his leadership is impossible. So he and his team have to go" (13.02.15)	-5
Communists of Russia	N. Musul'bes, a secretary of the Central Committee of CR: "Putin is a great President! But... only for capitalists in general, and in particular for the oligarchy" (28.05.15)	-1
Rodina Party	V. Fadeev, the chairman of the Saratov regional branch of the Party: "I fully support the desire of our national leader President Putin to make Russia a great independent country" (26.08.15)	5
Civic Platform	R. Shaikhutdinov, the leader of the Party: "Members of the party fully support the policy of President Putin, oppose the supporters of he Maidan and approve the accession of Crimea (17.04.15)	5
Russian Party of Pensioners for Justice	Party Resolution: "“Pensioners of Russia” have broken away from "A Just Russia" and supported Vladimir Putin" (29.02.12)	5
Greens Party	The Federal Council of the Greens Party adopted a resolution in support of the policies of President Putin (24.10.15)	5

Right Cause Party	V. Maratkanov, leader of the Party: "The high rating of the president of Russia is natural. It is not the result of short-term events " (02.04.15)	5
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Table 6. Main Issues of the First Political Cleavage, Summer 2015

Factor score	Issue	UR	CPRF	JR	LDPR	Yab	PR	RPR-PARNAS
-1.210	There was a coup in Ukraine in February 2014	5	5	5	5	-5	5	-5
-1.210	The Nazis came to power in Ukraine	5	5	5	5	-5	5	-5
-1.210	The Ukrainian elite is an instrument in the hands of the West	5	5	5	5	-5	5	-5
-1.210	It is necessary to support the Donetsk and Lugansk 'people's republics'	5	5	5	5	-5	5	-5
-1.210	Western sanctions against Russia are illegal	5	5	5	5	-5	5	-5
...
2.026	Russia annexed Crimea in violation of international law	-5	-5	-5	-5	5	-5	5
2.026	The Russian government is fighting in eastern Ukraine	-5	-5	-5	-5	5	-5	5
2.026	Putin's foreign policy is adventuristic	-5	-5	-5	-5	5	-5	5
2.026	It is necessary to abolish state corporations	-5	-5	-5	-5	5	-5	5
2.026	It is necessary to repeal the law on 'NGOs - Foreign Agents'	-5	-5	-5	-5	5	-5	5

* Party positions in every issue are evaluated using a scale from -5 to +5 (5 – positive attitude, -5 – negative attitude, 0 – neutral position or position is absent).

Key:

UR – United Russia

CPRF Party – Communist Party of the Russian Federation

LDPR – Liberal Democratic Party of Russia

JR – Just Russia

PR – Patriots of Russia

Yabl – Yabloko Party

RPR-PARNAS – Republican Party of Russia – People's Freedom Party

Table 7. Main Issues of the Second Political Cleavage in Summer 2015

Factor score	Issue	UR	CPRF	JR	LDPR	Yabl	PR	RPR-PARNAS
-1.840	It is necessary to move the single day of voting to a later date	-5	5	5	5	5	5	5
-1.840	Cancelling the municipal filter in gubernatorial elections	-5	5	5	5	5	5	5
-1.840	It is necessary to abandon early voting	-5	5	5	5	5	5	5
-1.840	It is necessary to stop the 'optimization' (cuts to) of the health care system	-5	5	5	5	5	5	5
-1.840	Real social budget expenditures are being reduced	-5	5	5	5	5	5	5
...
1.680	Attitudes to the reform of the Russian Academy of Sciences	5	-5	-1	4	-5	-2	-4
1.808	The legitimacy of destroying foods imported from countries under counter-sanctions	5	-5	-2	3	-5	-1	-5
2.375	The government anti-crisis plan is ineffective	4	-5	-4	-5	-5	-4	-5
2.490	Attitudes towards municipal reform	5	-5	-5	-3	-5	-5	-5
2.503	Cancelling the proportional system in the Duma elections	4	-5	-5	-5	-5	-5	-5

Table 8. Political Cleavages in the 2012-15 Regional Elections

	Nmb	1st PC	2nd PC	3rd PC	4th PC	5th PC
2012						
Ossetia	4	AD\SE	SE	Syst	No	
Udmurtia	4	AD\SE	SE\Syst	Syst	AD\Syst	
Krasnodar Krai	4	AD\SE	No	Syst	SE\Syst	
Penza Oblast	3	AD\SE	No	Syst		
Saratov Oblast	4	AD\SE	Syst\SE	Syst	No	
Sahalin Oblast	4	AD\SE	AD\SE\-	No	SE\syst	
2013						
Bashkortostan	3	AD\SE	SE\Syst	No		
Buryatia	4	AD\SE	SE\Syst	Syst	No	
Kalmykia	3	AD\SE	SE\Syst	Syst		
Yukutia	3	AD\SE	SE\Syst	Syst\AD		
Khakassia	2	AD\SE	Syst\AD			
Chechnya	3	AD\SE	Syst\AD	Syst\SE		
ArkhangelskOblast	4	AD\SE	Syst\SE	Syst\AD	Syst\SE\AD	
VladimirOblast	4	AD\SE	Syst\SE	Syst\AD	No	
IvanovoOblast	5	AD\Syst.	SE\Syst	Syst\SE	No	No
IrkutskOblast	4	AD\Syst.	SE\Syst	Syst	No	
KemerovoOblast	2	AD\SE	Syst			
Rostov Oblast	3	AD\SE	Syst\SE	No		
Smolensk Oblast	3	AD\Syst.	Syst\AD	Syst\SE		
Ulyanovsk	3	AD\Syst.	SE\Syst	Syst\AD		
Yaroslavl Oblast	5	AD\Syst.	Syst\SE	Syst\AD	No	No
Trans-Baikal Krai	3	AD\Syst.	Syst\SE	No		
2014						
Republic of Altai	3	S(U)	AD\Syst	SE\Syst		
Kabardino-Balkaria	2	S(U)	AD\Syst			
Karachay-Cherkessia	2	S(U)	AD\Syst			
Mari El	2	S(U)	AD\Syst			
Tatarstan	2	S(U)	AD\Syst			
Tuva	2	S(U)	AD\Syst			
Khabarovsk Krai	2	S(U)	AD\Syst			
Briansk Oblast	3	S(U)	AD\Syst	SE\Syst		
Volgograd Oblast	2	S(U)	AD\Syst			
Tula Oblast	2	S(U)	AD\Syst			
Crimea	3	S(U)	SE\Syst	Syst\AD		
Sevastopol	2	S(U)	SE\Syst			
NenetsAD	3	S(U)	Syst\AD	SE\Syst		
2015						
Komi Republic	2	S(U)	Syst\AD			
BelgorodOblast	2	S(U)	AD\SE			
Voronezh Oblast	2	S(U)	AD\SE			
Kaluga Oblast	2	S(U)	AD\Syst			
Kostroma Oblast	2	S(U)	AD\Syst			
Kurgan Oblast	2	S(U)	AD\Syst			

Magadan Oblast	2(<)	S(U)	AD\Syst			
Novosibirsk Oblast	2	S(U)	AD\Syst			
Ryazan Oblast	2	S(U)	AD\Syst			
Chelyabinsk Oblast	2	S(U)	AD\Syst			
Yamal-Nenets AD	2	S(U)	AD\Syst			

Key:

Nmb – Number of political cleavages in a region

PC – Political cleavage

AD – Authoritarian-Democratic political cleavage

SE – Socio-economic political cleavage

Syst – Systemic political cleavage

No – A cleavage has no interpretation

S(U) – Systemic (Ukraine) political cleavage

Table 9. Political and Social Interpretation of Electoral Cleavages in the 2012-15 Regional Elections

	Nmb	1st EC		2nd EC		3rd EC		4th EC		5th EC		6th EC	
		PI	SI	PI	SI	PI	SI	PI	SI	PI	SI		
2012													
Ossetia	5	No	Urb	No	No	No	No	AD	No	Syst	No		
Udmurtia	2	AD	Urb	SE	DC								
Krasnodar Krai	2	AD	No	SE	Urb								
Penza Oblast	2	AD	Urb, WB	SE	DC, EA								
Saratov Oblast	3	AD	No	No	Urb, DC, EA	No	No						
Sakhalin Oblast	3	AD	DC	No	EA, WB	No	Urb						
2013													
Bashkortostan	2	AD	Urb, Wb	SE	DC, EA								
Buryatia	3	AD	Urb, Wb	SE	DC, EA	No	No						
Kalmykia	3	AD, Syst	DC	No	WB	No	No						
Yukutia	3	AD	WB	SE	DC, EA	No	Urb, EA						
Khakassia	3	No	Urb, EA	No	DC	AD	DC						
Chechnya	2	AD	EA	No	DC, WB								
Arkhangelsk Oblast	4	No	Urb, DC	No	No	No	No	SE	EA				
Vladimir Oblast	6	AD	Urb, EA	No	DC	No	Urb, EA	No	No	No	WB	Syst	No
IvanovoOblast	4	AD	Urb, EA	No	Urb	No	DC	SE	Urb, WB				
IrkutskOblast	5	AD	Urb, DC, EA	SE	DC, EA	No	No	No	DC	No			
KemerovoOblast	2	AD	Urb	No	Urb								
Rostov Oblast	2	AD	No	SE	Urb, DC, EA								
Smolensk Oblast	4	AD	Urb, DC	Syst	No	SE	DC						
Ulyanovsk	3	AD	Urb, DC, EA	SE	No	No	EA						
Yaroslavl Oblast	4	No	Urb, EA	No	DC, EA	No	No	No	No				
Trans-Baikal Krai	3	AD	Urb, WB	SE	Urb, WB	No	No						
2014													
Republic of Altai	5	No	Urb, DC	No	No	AD	DC	AD, SE	No	No	No		
Kabardino-Balkaria	3	AD	No	No	Urb, EA	No	No						
Karachay-Cherkessia	2	AD, S(U)	No	AD	No								
Mari El	2	S(U), AD	Urb, EA	No	DC								

Tatarstan	1	S(U), AD	Urb, DC, EA										
Tuva	3	AD	Urb, EA	S(U)	Urb, DC	AD	EA						
Khabarovsk Krai	4	AD	Urb, DC, WB	No	WB	No	EA, WB	No	No				
Briansk Oblast	3	AD	No	S(U), SE	Urb, EA	No	No						
Volgograd Oblast	3	AD	Urb	S(U)	Urb	No	Urb, DC						
Tula Oblast	3	AD	EA	S(U)	Urb	S(U)	WB						
Crimea	4	AD	-	No	-	AD	-	No					
Sevastopol	2	No	-	No	-								
NenetsAD	2	AD	-	No									
2015													
Komi Republic	2	AD	EA	No	DC								
Belgorod Oblast	2	S(U), AD	DC, EA	AD	DC								
Voronezh Oblast	1	AD	Urb										
Kaluga Oblast	3	AD	Urb, DC, WB	No	DC								
Kostroma Oblast	3	S(U), AD	DC	No	EA								
Kurgan Oblast	2	S(U), AD	No	No	No								
Magadan Oblast	3	AD, S(U)	No	S(U)	No	No	WB						
Novosibirsk Oblast	3	AD	EA	No	Urb	No	Urb						
Ryazan Oblast	2	AD	Urb	No	EA								
Chelyabinsk Oblast	2	AD	DC, EA	No	No								
Yamal-Nenets AD	2	S(U), AD	No	AD	No								

Key:

Nmb – Number of electoral cleavages in a region

EC – Political cleavage

PI – Political interpretation

SI – Social interpretation

AD – strong ($R > 0.5$) correlation with the authoritarian-democratic political cleavageSE – strong ($R > 0.5$) correlation with the socioeconomic political cleavageSyst – strong ($R > 0.5$) correlation with the systemic political cleavageS (U) – strong ($R > 0.5$) correlation with the systemic (Ukraine) political cleavage

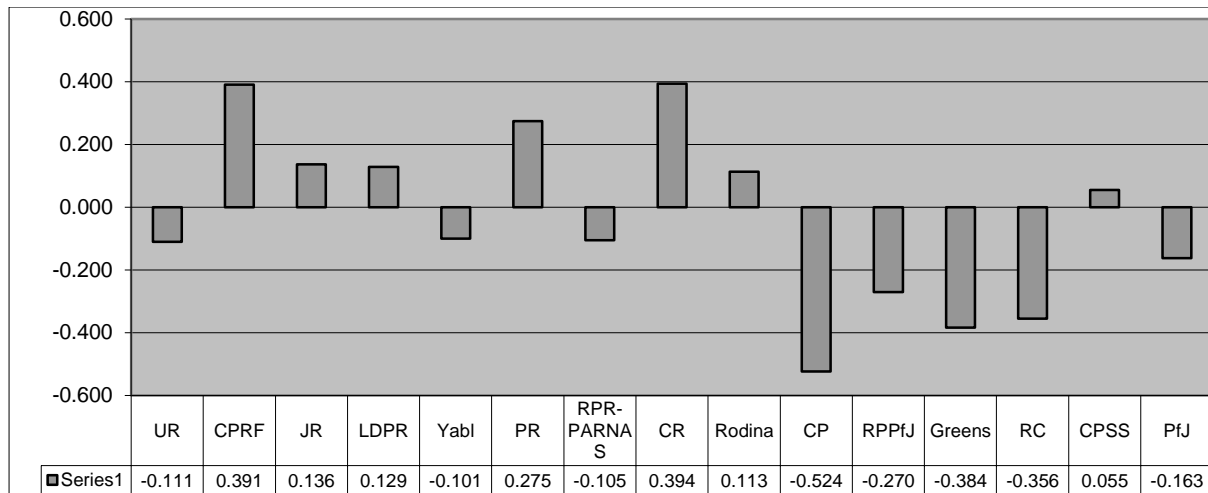
Urb – the level of the urbanization as a predictor of a cleavage

DC – demographic characteristics as a predictor of a cleavage

EA – the level of the economic activity as a predictor of a cleavage

WB – the level of well-being as a predictor of a cleavage

No – A cleavage has no interpretation

Chart 1. Factor Loadings of Parties in the Third Political Cleavage in Summer 2015

Key:

UR – United Russia

CPRF Party – Communist Party of the Russian Federation

LDPR – Liberal Democratic Party of Russia

JR – Just Russia

PR – Patriots of Russia

Yabl – Yabloko Party

RPR-PARNAS – Republican Party of Russia – People's Freedom Party

CR – Communist of Russia

Rodina – Rodina Party

CP – Civic Platform

RPPfJ – Russian Party of Pensioners for Justice

Greens – Russian Ecological Party 'Green'

RC – Right Cause Party

CPSS – Communist Party of Social Justice

PfJ – Party for Justice